

CLAIMS:

1. A method for obtaining information to augment commercials in a data stream, comprising:

obtaining preference information from at least one user via a user interface (130, 400, 500);

extracting descriptive information from commercials (200) in the data stream;

determining, for each of the commercials, whether the extracted descriptive information corresponds with the preference information; and

responsive to the determining step, locating information from an external source via a computer network (180) regarding at least one of the commercials whose extracted descriptive information corresponds with the preference information.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein:

the external source comprises at least one server (182, 184, 192, 194, 195).

3. The method of claim 1, wherein:

the data stream comprises at least one video program.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein:

the data stream comprises at least one audio program.

5. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

displaying the located information to the at least one user on a display device (190).

6. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

displaying a link to the located information to the at least one user on a display device (190).

7. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
storing the located information on a storage device (120) for subsequent retrieval by  
the at least one user.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein:  
the located information comprises information regarding a product or service  
advertised in the at least one of the commercials whose extracted descriptive information  
corresponds with the preference information.

9. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
scanning the video stream to detect the commercials;  
wherein the extracting descriptive information step is performed for commercials  
detected in the scanning step.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein:  
the obtaining preference information step comprises obtaining a user input (500)  
indicating an amount of information that is desired to be obtained from the external source  
for the at least one of the commercials whose extracted descriptive information  
corresponds with the preference information.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein:  
the obtaining preference information step comprises obtaining information (400)  
identifying at least one category of commercials.

12. The method of claim 1, wherein:  
the obtaining preference information step comprises obtaining information (400)  
identifying at least one music track.

13. The method of claim 1, wherein:  
the obtaining preference information step comprises obtaining information (400)  
identifying at least one performer.

14. The method of claim 1, wherein:

the obtaining preference information step comprises identifying at least one sample commercial by the at least one user via the user interface (400), and extracting descriptive information from the at least one sample commercial.

15. The method of claim 1, wherein:

the obtaining preference information step comprises obtaining at least one keyword from the at least one user via the user interface (400);

the extracting descriptive information step comprises extracting text from the commercials; and.

the extracted descriptive information corresponds with the preference information when the extracted text corresponds with the at least one keyword.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein:

the extracting text from the commercials comprises extracting text from closed captioned data of the commercials.

17. The method of claim 15, wherein:

the extracting text from the commercials comprises converting an audio portion of the commercials to text.

18. An apparatus for obtaining information to augment commercials in a data stream, comprising:

means (130, 400, 500) for obtaining preference information from at least one user;

means (170) for extracting descriptive information from commercials (200) in the data stream;

means (140) for determining, for each of the commercials, whether the extracted descriptive information corresponds with the preference information; and

means (155), responsive to the determining step, for locating information from an external source via a computer network (180) regarding at least one of the commercials whose extracted descriptive information corresponds with the preference information.

19. The apparatus of claim 18, wherein:

the external source comprises at least one server (182, 184, 192, 194, 195).

20. A program storage device tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by a machine to perform a method for obtaining information to augment commercials in a data stream, the method comprising:

obtaining preference information from at least one user via a user interface (130, 400, 500);

extracting descriptive information (170) from commercials (200) in the data stream; determining, for each of the commercials, whether the extracted descriptive information corresponds with the preference information; and

responsive to the determining step, locating information (300) from an external source via a computer network (180) regarding at least one of the commercials whose extracted descriptive information corresponds with the preference information.